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THE MARTYR AS WITNESS COPTIC AND COPTO-ARABIC HAGIOGRAPHIES AS MEDIATORS OF RELIGIOUS MEMORY[1]

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Summary

This article argues for a novel reading of Coptic and Copto-Arabic hagiographies. Relying on the analysis of Coptic and Copto-Arabic traditions belonging to the Passion of Victor son of Romanos, also known as Victor the General, the author investigates issues concerning the transmission of texts, intertextuality, the dialectics between history and memory and their implications in the articulation of Coptic religious memory. In the present article the body of the martyr is viewed as a text and the memory of bodily experiences transmitted through texts as pertaining to religious memory. The author posits that far from negating his body, the martyr made it the chart of his belief and placed it in the foreground for everybody to see, to hear about and to remember. She explicates that the practices to which the martyr subordinated his body and the experience of martyrdom placed him in a state of liminality.

The body as text

The knowledge that the body has of the world is transmitted through culturally shaped experiences. Each time, each society has its own modes of construction of the body. As an agent of communication the body is the bearer of social, historical, political and religious meanings, it is the pivot of our integration in the world.[2] To be effective the body has to project itself outside its own frame because corporal behaviour and performances lose their meaning without the presence of an audience. Gestures, expressions of the face and eyes, emotions, the tone of the voice form a constellation of bodily signs that may be defined as *infra-corporal* signs.[3] They complement the word and imprint on it an infinity of nuances that interlocutors (the audience) are expected to decipher. Within a culture the actors dispose a certain common corporal register. This symbolic network translates the specifity of their relation with the world. Mary Douglas has shown in *Purity and Danger* that there are symbolic relationships between the human body and the social body and that the control of the body reveals the control of the society.

The *stranger* or foreigner who is ignorant of the totality of these infra-corporal signs and of the subtleties involved in their interaction has another body-language and a different understanding of the signs. Communication may also be disturbed by the *estranged* or *alienated*, by the *unusual*, by the *unconventional*, and by the *mad*, that is by *strangers within*. These are Others who cause disorder and whose behaviour is not reflected in the reassuring mirror of corporal identity of the society in which they live. They are supposed to know the rules of the society, but, knowingly or unknowingly, reject or violate them. Foreigners and strangers within provoke a rupture within the corporal solidarity of the majority, they disarticulate ritual interactions, they are disconcerting and surrounded by chaos or more exactly by a different order.[4]

Much of what characterizes a given culture at a given time is influenced by existing traditions. The assimilation of old traditions with newer ways of life and new concepts is a frequent aspect of periods of transition. This was the case in Late Antiquity with its "Hellenistic levelling", the spread of Christianity,[5] and later with the supremacy of Arab Islamic culture. With the patina of time, new trends that had been incorporated became customs.[6] Ascetism was one of the traditions that adapted to changes of time, culture and religious belief.[7] Assimilation, syncretism, acculturation and integration imply continuity and change, hence transformation. I would like to introduce the concept of innovation as a basic requisite to the process of transformation. Innovation should be perceived not as a sudden mutation but, rather, as the result of a society's gradual reinvention of its cultural heritage and re-elaboration of its oral tradition.[8]

Innovators are often foreigners or strangers within. These outsiders may act as mediators or "cultural brokers" between different forms of culture. As intermediaries they form a bridge between different groups and translate cultural idioms from one situation to another.[9] The personage around whom the present study is constructed, Victor son of Romanos, had all the requirements for being posed as an innovator and as an exemplar.[10] Not only was he a foreigner to Egypt but he also was an outsider to his own society. As a martyr he was a witness, that is someone who is apart, a stranger who is there but not *in*. He was the passer-by, the

onlooker whose testimony could change the course of things. In early Christianity, a martyr was also the champion of a new body of knowledge,[11] a charismatic person who, by offering his life for his faith, subdued chaos and introduced a different order.[12] The meaning of martyr combines the idea of self-sacrifice and annihilation of the body for an ideal with the act of witnessing an event. This double value is present also today in the Arabic word *shahid* which means both martyr, that is one who sacrifices himself for a cause, and witness. The act of the martyr made an ideological choice a question of life and death. By placing a belief before physical survival the martyr asserted the preeminence of culture on nature. However, the martyr relied on his body in order to make his choice public and to reach his goal. Far from negating his body, the martyr made it the chart of his belief and placed it in the foreground for everybody to see and to hear about.

In the present paper I consider the bodily practices of martyrs, saints, and ascetics in early Christianity and Coptic hagiographies and martyrologies as beloning to what Connerton (1989: 72f.) defines as "incorporating practices", that is culturally specific postures and gestures; I consider them also to be part of "inscribing practices" that have been recorded in writing in the various biographies, hagiographies and martyrologies. I propose to view the body of the martyr as a text and the memory of bodily experiences transmitted through texts as pertaining to religious memory. I argue that the practices to which martyrs subordinated their bodies and the experience of martyrdom permitted them to dissociate themselves from their bodies and placed them in a state of liminality.

As mentioned above I restrict my inquiry to the traditions related to the martyrdom of Victor son of Romanos, also known as Victor Stratelates or Victor the General. A detailed analysis of all available documents would greatly exceed the limits of the present article. Therefore, I shall first give a brief account of the traditions concerning this martyr and reflect on the question of their transmission. This will be followed by a synthesis of the different versions of the Passion of Apa Victor son of Romanos. Thereafter I shall examine the way to liminality.

The traditions of Victor son of Romanos

The Passion of Victor son of Romanos pertains to the cycle of Basilides also known as the cycle of Diocletian. This cycle consists of a chain of traditions stretching from the 5th century to the 19th century, and relating the martyrdoms of high officials of the court of Diocletian. These martyrs were Antiochenes of high birth who were related to each other by family ties and who withstood martyrdom and died in Egypt.[13] As a literary genre the traditions of Apa Victor son of Romanos belong to the so-called epic Passions.[14] Traditions around Apa Victor son of Romanos exist in different languages: Greek (the martyrdom of Victor and Stephanou), Latin (the martyrdom of Victor and Corona), Coptic, Arabic and Gheez.[15] In the present paper I concentrate on the Coptic and Copto-Arabic traditions. Setting the martyrdom of Apa Victor as the prototype will, in my view, facilitate the study of existing analogies and derivatives in different languages and of different periods. Focusing on one cycle will permit me to follow the ways in which the narrative was transformed through time and how religious memory was constructed.

Coptic cycles relating the acts of martyrs were composed from the 9th to the 12th century. This corresponds to the period during which the last Coptic hagiographies were elaborated. At first, the texts were probably produced by the same school in Alexandria and were often attributed to fictitious authors like John Chrysostom and Demetrius of Antioch.[16] From the Greek-speaking environment of Alexandria *ad Aegyptum* the narratives spread to the Egyptian hinterland, and to be more precise to the Thebaïd.[17] They were translated into the Egyptian vernacular, Coptic. Translating involved interpretation and making the narratives accessible to the Egyptian mentality.[18] Coptic hagiographic texts adopted what Baumeister has defined as the "koptischen Konsens". Accordingly, the main theme of the "enduring life" (unzerstörbaren Lebens) is consistently reiterated. The "koptischer Konsens" incorporated martyrs, even those who like Victor son of Romanos were originally foreigners, into what could be described as the "Egyptian mode". The characters were Egyptianized and thus rendered familiar and understandable to Egyptians.[19]

As most Coptic hagiographies the Coptic tradition concerning Victor son of Romanos is based on a Greek original which was probably composed in Alexandria during the 5th century.[20] The Coptic manuscripts relating the acts of *Apa* Victor son of Romanos date from the 10th century. This was a period during which the Coptic language was in regression and was being replaced by Arabic. Christians of Egypt were challenged by the spread of Islam and had, by this time, become the autochthonous ethnic and religious minority of the country. The Coptic hagiographic tradition of *Apa Biktor* (Victor) son of Romanos includes martyrologies, encomia and homelies. Among them we find a panegyric at the British Museum ascribed to Celestinus of Rome, two encomia at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris attributed, one to Theodosius of Jerusalem and the other to John Chrysostom, and a fourth document in the Pierpont Morgan codex accredited to Theopemptus of Antioch. In addition there are fragments in St. Petersburg, Vienna and Turin. A number of these texts have been more or less adequately studied and published.[21] Apart from the documents where Victor son of Romanos is the central character there are a number of hagiographic texts belonging to the Basilides cycle where he is mentioned as an exemplar, as is the case in the martyrdom of Tecla and Paese.[22]

The Copto-Arabic tradition of *Mari Buqtor 'ibn Romanos* (i.e. Saint Victor son of Romanos) is quite rich. It also consists of martyrologies, encomia and homelies translated and adaptated from Coptic originals. The texts were produced during the period stretching from the 13th century to the 19th century. However, the manuscripts have never been studied nor edited. Graf[23] tried to classify a number of manuscripts concerning *Mari Buqtor 'ibn Romanos* but his attempt has often led to confusion, as he has mixed our martyr with another saint Victor, namely Victor of Shu. Samir[24] has arranged the Arabic texts according to their incipit. In this way he has been able to recognize 5 different versions of the martyrdom and 2 different accounts of miracles for the anniversary of the dedication of Victor son of Romanos' church on the 27th of Hathur. The texts were attributed to reknowned authors like Cyriacus of al-Bahnasa, Demetrius patriarch of Antioch, Celestinus of Rome and Tabuntus (Theopemptos) of Antioch. We

also have a biographical record written in the mid-13th century by Mikhail of Atrib and Malij and edited by Basset and Forget.[25] The homelies in Arabic recount the building of the churches and the miracles of *Mari Buqtor 'ibn Romanos*. According to the Coptic-Arabic Synaxarium the feast of Victor son of Romanos' death was on the 27th of Baramuda. A list of churches dedicated to *Mari Buqtor* was drawn up by Abu Salih the Armenian.[26]

Texts talk to texts

The traditions of Victor son of Romanos give evidence of manuscript transmission. Texts recall other previous texts. They were translated from one language to another. They were re-written, re-interpreted and combined with other independent texts so as to form new texts.[27] Texts were recycled and adapted to the taste and mentality of the place and time. Taking our case study, we observe for example how the court of Diocletian evolved from being the martial, male dominated body of Coptic (and Greek) traditions[28] into becoming the more "oriental" community of the Arabic versions. Here palace strifes are disclosed before us and intrigues of the harem are revealed.[29] Whereas in Coptic texts the father of Victor, Romanos, is a general (*stratelates*), in Arabic texts he is the trusted vizier (*wazir*) and confident of Diocletian. Morever, while Coptic texts do not give the name of Victor's mother, Arabic documents tell us that she was a Christian lady of high birth and that she was called Martha. Victor is often, as in BNP Arabe 131, fol. 49v, hailed as the "son of Martha" (*ya 'ibn Marta*). Other details in the Arabic versions reflect the Egyptian background, as for example, the comparison of Victor's beauty with the roses of the month of Baramuda, the mummification of the martyr's body, the lamentations of Martha and of her female companion, Thephasia (the sister of the martyr Claudius), at the announcement of his death, and Martha's voyage on the Nile in search of Victor's hidden body.[30]

There is, to use the expression of Edward Saïd (1983: 46), a "genealogy of texts" where each younger text refers to a mythical first text. Whether this first text actually had existed or not is of minor importance for the authors and copyists of the following

generations.[31] An example of this is given by the encomium of John Chrysostom on Apa Victor son of Romanos[32], where the reference to "the Venerable Book" punctuates the flow of the narrative. In turn, copies established their own hierarchy based on age. The older copy being the more authoritative acted as an original.[33] Generations of texts testify not only to their transmission through time but also to intertextuality, that is the interaction between texts and contexts, the interpenetration between the written texts, orality and iconography. 'Dialogized texts' go on modifying each other, and in that process meaning is continuously renewed.[34] Plagiarism and forgery have different connotations according to place and time. In Coptic and Copto-Arabic hagiographic literature the recognition of an older text as "authentic" depended on the trustworthiness of the milieu that created it. The "original" text was often accredited to a known and often fictitious author who was supposed to have lived in the glorious patristic period of the 4th century.[35] The testimony of such authors added to the narrative's authority and credibility. Thus, the encomia and homilies of Victor son of Romanos were ascribed to different authors such as Theodosius of Jerusalem, Celestinus of Rome, John Chrysostom and Theopemptus of Antioch. There is often mention of a mysterious priest, Demetrius of Antioch.[36] Nevertheless, most relayers of hagiographic compositions usually remained anonymous. Sometimes, as for example in BM Or. 7022 at the British Museum and Ms. Copte 129[15] and Ms. Arabe 212 at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the copyist added a colophon at the end of the manuscript.[37] Here the copyist stated his name, title(s) and ancestry, and prayed for spiritual reward for the good deed he had achieved by perpetuating the memory of those who had sacrificed themselves for the sake of their religion. This multiple and anonymous authorship was due in part to the political situation of the time. The disputes with Byzantium and the Chalcedonians from the end of the fifth century to the first half of the eighth century were succeeded by the struggle against the Arab-Moslem domination. Religious, social and political motives coalesced. The stories of martyrs were used not only to keep the memory of past events alive but also to help understand the present.[38] In the Basilides cycle, to which the passion of Victor son of Romanos

belongs, the wicked emperor Diocletian is originally either an Egyptian goatherd or someone of low birth who has lived in Egypt for a long time. Once he becomes emperor Diocletian turns against his former countrymen and harasses them. But worse than renegating his origins, Diocletian is an apostate who savagely persecutes his former brethren in religion. The martyr, on the other hand, stands unwavering against the enemies of his religion and the suppressive ruling power and its representatives.[39]

Literate orality

The Coptic and Copto-Arabic traditions of Victor son of Romanos were, like all hagiographic texts, elaborated in the monastic milieu. They were many-layered narratives which were read aloud or retold to a wider mixed congregation on the martyr's day. I consider these documents as commemorative narratives where knowledge was transmitted both in writing and orally. They testify to the way religious and social memory has been constructed. They served not only to preserve events for posterity but also to express religious, political and social ideas, public and individual ethics.[40] Some hagiographical texts, like the ones belonging to the traditions of Victor son of Romanos, were literary fabrications cast in an established form. They functioned to transmit ideas and actions to different categories of believers, whether they were monks or laymen, men or women, young or old, rich or poor, literate, illiterate or semi-literate, polyglot or just knew one language, city dwellers or countryside people. The fields of reference used in the texts had to encompass a wide spectrum of associations to reach the different levels of understanding in a mixed congregation. The formulation of such texts was both written and individual on the one hand, and oral and collective on the other hand. The oral quality of the texts is shown by their preference for additive forms rather than subordinative clauses, their reliance on formulaic utterances, mnemonics, loci classici, redundancy and their use of agonistic, emphatic tones. Events are grouped around people rather than people around events. The narrative evolves in a somewhat timeless fashion. The story is interspersed with elements of fiction and embedded in the

marvellous, which transform the *dramatis personae* into legendary mythical characters. Orality and literacy were not mutually exclusive. Both illiterate, semi-literate and literate people were capable of appreciating the same text, although not in the same way. Retelling or reading the acts of martyrs in front of an audience involved an element of recollection. The stories were embedded in treatise rhetoric of a past that was represented ideologically and perpetuated by tradition. The narratives invoked and recreated a specific past, and by constructing that past, they produced myths. They told of the beginnings of a new religious and social order. This ideal past was projected back to the Era of Martyrs under Diocletian, that is before Chalcedon (451 C.E.), and before the Islamic hegemony.[41]

The birth of a divine child

Coptic sources inform us that in the third year of his reign, Diocletian established the cult of 70 deities (35 male and 35 female).[42] He forced his subjects to sacrifice to his gods. Those who refused, as many Christians did, were to be tortured and even condemned to death if they remained adamant. So that despite his reforms, the name of Diocletian was to remain forever tied to one of the last great persecutions of Christians which took place in 303-312 C.E. Coptic and Arabic texts mention that Diocletian was originally a Christian but that he renegated his faith. The reasons given for his apostasy are varied, but the result was that he became determined to rid the empire of all Christians. As a consequence Diocletian was to be remembered as the persecutor par excellence. The Coptic calendar also known as the Era of Martyrs reckons its years from August 29th, 284 C.E. which was the year of Diocletian's accession to the throne.[43]

The only information we have of Victor son of Romanos' childhood is given by Arabic manuscripts as BNP Arabe 212, BNP Arabe 4782 and BNP Arabe 4793, and the Ethiopic manuscript Ms. Oriental 729 in the British Museum. According to these sources Victor's mother, Martha, who was a devout Christian had lived with her husband Romanos[44] for thirty years and had borne him no son.[45] One day, after Martha had finished her prayers, the

statue of the Virgin Mary nodded to her signifying that her supplications had been heard. In due time, Martha gave birth to a son in the town of Antioch. She sent a messenger to announce the news to her husband who was fighting the enemy on the eastern frontiers of the empire together with Diocletian. In our story, as in most examples of virgin birth, the "real" father of a child of divine essence, here a future martyr and saint, is immaterial. This father is of the eternal essence that has no perishable form, and the agent of conception is perceived as the embodiment of a higher cosmic energy. The mother on the other hand is the *prima materia.* She represents the substance, the womb without which the divine spirit or Verb cannot become flesh.[46] Elements like pain, afterbirth and blood are non-existent during birth, and the child's safety is often threatened by evil powers. Moreover, the earthly parents of the divine child belong to the privileged class of society.[47]

The son of Martha was called Victor, and as a further sign of the baby's sanctity God let down a gold cloth to wrap the infant in it. Victor was baptized by the archbishop Theodore, the emperor and the empress attended the ceremony of baptism which was sumptuous. However, the ceremony and the feast following it must have been full of commotion. The texts say that unable to contain her jealousy, the empress tried to kill Victor, but the baby was saved by the Virgin Mary, and that, pushed by his wife, Diocletian tried to steal the golden veil in which the baby was wrapped. However, an angel snatched it away and flew up into the air with it.[48] The documents also inform us that Victor was betrothed to the daughter of his father's colleague, Basileides at the age of ten.[49] We are also told that Victor was sent to school where he was introduced to all the books of the prophets, and that the angel of God preserved Victor from every sin.[50]

The ascetic path

Coptic and Copto-Arabic documents relate that Victor was a very handsome youth. He had an athletic body and his long hair fell freely upon his shoulders. He was a devout Christian. He was charitable, took no interest in appearances and associated only with his inferiors whom he always helped, especially if they were Chris-

tians. He lived in his own apartments in his parents' house. He led a secluded life avoiding the company of his parents, their friends and of other youths. He prayed day and night (1065 prayers during the daytime and 730 prayers each night). He ate once a week, fasting from "one Sabbath to the next Sabbath". He neither ate meat nor fish and never drank wine or any alcoholic or fermented beverage. He actually lived upon a diet of bread and salt and drank only water. He was chaste, used no vulgar language and never swore. He slept on the hard ground and never took a bath. We are also told that Christ appeared to him a number of times during this period and encouraged him to persevere in the ascetical way.[51]

Ascetics imposed upon themselves techniques of the body commonly known as practices of self-mortification or self-denial. Among these practices we find chastity, the avoidance of washing and sleeplessness. Chastity entailed the purity of words, thoughts and deeds. It was not only attached to the idea that sex defiled, but also to the conviction that it was possible to transmute and channel reproductive powers into spiritual energy.[52] Chastity was also tied to the ostentatious deprecation of the body and disregard for its needs and appearence. Fine clothes, perfumes, jewellery and other types of ornamentation were condemned. Washing and care of the body were said to make it "soft" and consequently were to be avoided. However, bodies of martyrs, saints and holy persons were known to perfume the air. They were naturally clean as a reflection of the purity of their souls'.[53] Deprivation of sleep was the mark of the spiritual athlete. The goal of wakefulness and all-night vigils was to transcend the normal bodily processes and to achieve heightened consciousness; it helped the ascetic in his vision quest and permitted him to "see" the divinity.

Other recurring features of religious ascetism were fasting and the observance of a special diet. I would like to reflect at greater length on fasting and diet because food is a symbolic vehicle for establishing group identity and because food customs mirror the ordered patterning of a society.[54] Foodways bind individuals together, serve as a medium of inter-group communication, define the limits of the group's outreach and identity, distinguish in-group from out-group, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for performance of group rituals.[55]

Fasting or *inedia*, that is the complete or partial abstinence from nourishment, has been connected with rituals of purification, atonement and death, but also with prophecy and revelation.[56] Diet as a form of control exercised over the body with the aim of establishing a discipline was a basic component of both traditional regimen in medical practice and of ascetic regulation in religion.[57] The diet of monks, hermits and of ascetics in general consisted mainly of bread, salt, which was supposed to keep illness away, and water.[58] Sometimes we find vegetables, fruits and oil. The only drink was water. We notice a general avoidance of meat, as it was supposed to make the body heavy, and to give impure thoughts. Meat represented vital energy and prosperity, it was also related to the flesh, hence to sexuality, and to the dead, thus to killing.[59] Ascetic discipline and diet might have actually helped the future martyr in changing his metabolism so that he could sustain pain under torture.[60] He could train his body to rely on alternative sources of glucose for the brain and to reduce his need for water.[61] However, we should not strip the stories of saints and martyrs of the marvellous. Saints, martyrs and other holy people were extraordinary individuals and as such were posed as exemplars.[62] Without insertions of wonders, the narratives would have lost both their popularity and meaning.[63]

The warrior of God

At the time when Diocletian decreed the worship of his idols Victor was in his twentieth year, that is he was nineteen.[64] All sources agree on the fact that Victor was of high birth and that his father, who was very close to Diocletian, occupied an important post in the army. Here I would like to draw attention to what could seem an inconsistency in the story. Although Victor is always depicted as someone uninterested in military expeditions and in sports, the texts imply that he actually had a high rank in the army.[65] In all the stories of his miracles, and whenever Victor son of Romanos appears in dreams, he is fully dressed in his general's uniform.[66] The same is true in the iconographic representations of this martyr as shown in the monastery of Bawit,[67] and in the monastery of Saint Anthony.[68] Victor son of Romanos has a round childish face, he is

shown in the attire of a military byzantine horseman, a spear in his hand and the crown of martyrs on his head; he is riding either a white or a brown horse.[69] Hagiographies and martyrologies are full of military saints and martyrs who have fought for their faith.[70] The seeming contradiction between the life of a soldier and that of the the peaceable ascetic youth retired from the limelights of society appears to have bothered neither the authors of the texts, nor the storytellers, nor their audiences. From a historical point of view it has to be remembered that Christianity had spread in the ranks of the army already during the first centuries, and that the loyalty of Christian soldiers towards the emperor was often tested. Further, both the soldier and the ascetic were submitted to harsh discipline, both fought for a king and a cause, and both underwent a series of ordeals before reaching their final goal. Constant interaction between the written text(s), the oral performance(s) and iconography united the ascetic to the warrior, and in this process created a heroic religious figure whose struggle against injustice and Evil evoked that of other heroes of the common lore.

The pursuit of martyrdom

According to our sources, it was Victor's father, Romanos, who was in charge of executing the imperial edict. When the turn of his son comes he orders him to sacrifice to the gods. Victor refuses. A long argument between father and son follows. Each of them scorns the other; the heat of the discussion rises dramatically until they both disown each other. Finally, Romanos condemns his son to death and hands him over to Diocletian. The emperor tries to coax Victor. He reminds him of his (Victor's) position in society and that the duty of a son is to obey his father. But this is to no avail; Victor remains inflexible. Changing tone, Diocletian threatens the young man by mentioning the tortures that he, the emperor, has to power to inflict upon his subjects, even those of high birth. Victor answers with insolence. He tears off the gold chain and the insignia of his rank which he is wearing and throws them in Diocletian's face. Diocletian loses his temper and condemns Victor to death. However, the execution is not to take place in Antioch but in Egypt. As a mark of degradation, Victor has the crown of his

head shaved,[71] a bell is attached round his neck, he is tied behind a horse and is dragged around Antioch while four soldiers beat him with branches of a palm tree. This is Victor's first martyrdom.[72]

Although of noble standing and perhaps occupying a high position in the army, Victor is condemned to torture. We know that in classical Greece and during the Roman Republic, citizens of higher social classes were not tortured. However, with the establishment of the Roman empire, the emperor not only made laws, but also exceptions to laws. He could do away with some of the privileges of the nobility, especially when it was felt that the imperial safety was in danger. Torture or *tormentum* originally referred to a form of punishment, including the aggravated death penalty, to which in classical Greece and under the Republic only slaves were subjected. Later, freemen of the lower social strata and also members of the nobility were liable to torture for certain crimes, in particular for the crime of *lesae majestatis.*[73] By rebelling against the divine kingship personified by the emperor Victor became a *perduellio*, in the sense of "public enemy" and more, a "deserter". Having lost his standing Victor son of Romanos could be humiliated and tortured. Torture had a public character; it entailed public dishonour, loss of dignity, status and respect. By submitting himself to torture and having his body broken, the martyr marginalized himself and cut his links with society.[74] He became a "threshold" person and entered the state of liminality.

Let us come back to our story. Diocletian writes to Armenius, the administrative governor (*Komes*) of Alexandria (*Rakote*) directing him to torture Victor three times.[75] Before leaving for Egypt, Victor is stripped of his clothes. His neck, hands and feet are loaded with iron fetters. He is allowed to see his mother a last time. At the end of his long and moving meeting with Martha, Victor asks her not to let his dead body remain in a foreign country. She is to bring it back to Antioch and give it an honourable burial.[76] After the farewell scene with his mother, Victor is then taken on board of the ship sailing for Alexandria. Once there, he is immediately led to the governor of the town, Armenius. During the entire meeting Victor is even more insolent and provocative than during his discussions with his father and Diocletian. He reminds Armenius that he owes his appointment as governor of Alexandria to his father Romanos

and to himself, Victor.[77] Irritated at being publicly reminded of his debt towards the prisoner, Armenius submits Victor to torture (hot irons, cutting the face, iron fetters, raking, burning with lamps and being thrown into the furnace). The texts tell us that during torture the heart (a metaphor for the soul) of Victor was carried up to heaven. There the assembled saints with the archangel Michael at their head welcomed him and encouraged him to endure the suffering he was being exposed to. Pain itself is never mentioned in the texts, but implied when we are told that whenever the situation became unbearable the archangel Michael came to Victor's rescue. Finally, Armenius decides to get rid of Victor and to put him to death. But the people of Alexandria, fearing that Romanos might one day regret his decision to sacrifice his only child and then take his revenge upon the city, convince Armenius to send Victor away. Armenius agrees and orders Victor to be taken southwards and delivered to Eutychianus, *dux* or military chief of the Thebaid.[78]

Victor reaches Antinoopolis, but the *dux* awaits him still further upstream. The small party, consisting of Victor and his gaolers, sails further south until it joins the party of Eutychianus. The latter improvises a tribunal and submits Victor to torture consisting of cutting off his tongue and ears, putting needles through his skin, making him wear a redhot iron helmet on his head and pouring boiling bitumen down his throat. Victor remains unwavering. In spite of having his tongue severed, he is still able to hold long speeches full of theological insights and discuss intricate religious matters with his torturer. Exasperated, Eutychianus sends Victor further south and exiles him to Hierakon, a military camp situated in the eastern desert.[79] According to Abu Salih the Armenian and other Arab chroniclers from the Middle-Ages, Hierakon was situated in the vicinity of al-Khusus, south-east of Asyut, and Victor lived there in a dark cell in an abandoned fortress.[80] Recent investigations, however, point instead to Deir el Gabrawi as being the death place of our martyr.[81] Victor remained in the desert camp for some time. He enjoyed relative freedom, making chairs and lamps which he sold in order to support himself. He led an ascetic life, fasting for long periods of time[82] and praying day and night.

One day Christ, in the shape of an old man, visits him.[83] Much of the dialogue between Victor and Jesus turns around the theme

of foreigness, not only the foreigner who lives in another environment than his original one but also the stranger within. This is the one who has become estranged from his own people, the one who as a consequence of alienation looses all the prerogatives of high birth and social ranking. Jesus soothes Victor's feelings of loss and reminds him that the reward awaiting him is greater than any transient earthly privileges. As most martyrs and saints Victor does not seek approval, affirmation or attention from anybody but God and Christ. He weeps and recalls his past kinship ties and social standing but does not regret them.[84] Foreigness and the change of environment are for him part of his ascetic training, the way to reach the realm of Christ.[85] Before leaving, Jesus tells Victor that he will be beheaded the following year. Victor prepares himself for death. With the money he saves from the sale of the objects he makes, Victor buys himself a coffin and provides for his own burial.[86]

Finally, Sebastianus, along with the praetor Asterius and the *dux* Soterichos, submits Victor to a last trial. Victor remains unshakeable while he is eviscerated, treated with boiling oil, has ashes and vinegar poured in his mouth, has red-hot knives driven in his skin, and while his eyes and tongue[87] are being pulled out. His faith is reinforced during his trial; his body is flooded with grace.[88] At this moment a young girl named Stephanou (in the latin sources she is Corona, the wife of a Roman soldier), proclaims her faith and declares that she sees the crown of martyrs over the head of Victor. In my view, the young woman whose name means "crown" both in Greek and in Latin, personifies the martyr's crown. Thus the crown, that is the reward awaiting the martyr, is represented by a feminine figure. However, the narrative does not seem to be affected by the introduction of a gendered symbol. In Copto-Arabic sources Stephanou is fifteen when inspired by the example of Victor son of Romanos converts to Christianity.[89]

Stephanou is submitted to torture and killed,[90] and Victor is finally decapitated. As in most hagiographies and martyrologies, the story ends abruptly. The actual death appears singularly anticlimactic, especially when put in relation to the lengthy, grim descriptions of torture and mutilations.[91] The death of the martyr was perceived positively in terms of release and imminent resurrection rather than defeat.[92] In the Ethiopic and Arabic versions of

Victor's last martyrdom we are told that Horion, the soldier who finishes the work as Victor's executioner, takes Victor's body and embalms it.[93] He then lays it in a coffin and hides it in a remote chamber of the fortress. Horion leaves afterwards for Antioch. There he hands over to Martha, Victor's mother, the sword which had been used for beheading her son.[94] Three years later, Martha, guided by the same Horion comes to Egypt. She is taken to the place where the mummy of Victor is kept. In all secrecy, she takes the body back to Antioch.

Abu Salih tells us that when they learned of the disappearance of the martyr's body the natives of the town of al-Khusus rebelled, for by then Apa Victor son of Romanos had become the saint protector of their city.[95] Here we are confronted with the question of the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body, bodily continuity and of how identity survives dismemberment and reasemblage. This was a central theme in the cult of saints and relics and in the different stories of miracles that were so popular with preachers and audiences. Bodies of martyrs and saints and parts of holy bodies remained incorrupt after death and burial; they never decayed.[96] This emphasis on the body parts as whole, on mutilated flesh as "intact", "unhurt" is a common feature of hagiographies and martyrologies. Martyrs and saints live on in their severed organs.[97] Martyrdom anticipated resurrection when the fragmented corpse would be refashioned by God and be granted eternal life and incorruptibility.[98] What is emphasized repeatedly is the reassembling of the fragmented body for burial and the victory of intactness over division. Bodies of individuals endowed with divine essence remain "unscathed", "unharmed". As mentioned earlier holy bodies perfume the air even if unwashed, while bodies of torturers are said to smell foul, to putrify and to wither away.

The body as battleground

The idea of a composite self that was prevalent in pharaonic Egypt[99] had developed into a separation between the self, representing the mind, and the body or matter. Matter was related to evil according to the Platonists and the Pythagoreans. Hence, it was deeply repulsive. Nevertheless, the material body was integral to

the notion of person and the needs of the body had to be reckoned with, it was also subjected to a strict discipline that restrained its impulses. In the time of our narrative (3rd century C.E.) pagans and Christians lived in the same mental world. Disdain for the body was in fashion among both of these groups, and both were familiar with techniques of subordinating the body to a strict discipline and to ascetism in general.[100] In *Body and Society*, Peter Brown argues that the drastic changes that occurred in the society of Late Antiquity were carried through by a minority of intensely religious young Christians, men and women, who had decided to own their own selves and become masters of their own bodies. They refused to comply with the rules of society. They inscribed a particular corporal identity on the body to mark it as cultural and to give it symbolic meaning, that is to differentiate it. Their bodies became the instruments of their rebellion against the "establishment", a way of declaring that they had new allegiances to an ideal order or society that was radically different from the old one. As so well expressed by Tertullian: "*Caro salutis cardo*";[101] the flesh of these young integrists, that is their bodies, became the axis of their salvation.

Foucault, who stands as the modern theorist of the disciplined body, investigated the interface between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self.[102] He maintained that the disciplined body becomes a repressive weapon and consequently gains power over the others. The disciplined body is predictable, it is dissociated from the self, thus it becomes instrumental. Ascetism was tied to self-discipline and self-denial as well as it conveyed the idea of detachment from or renunciation of the world *per se*; "being in the world, but not of it".[103] Ascetism was regarded as an effort to strengthen and not weaken the body;[104] it permitted the individual to enter what Keyes[104b] describes as "an altered state of consciousness". In fact, pagan philosophical and ascetic traditions valued many of the qualities for which Christian martyrs and saints became renowned.[105] The kind of body an ascetic strove to acquire and to cultivate was the disciplined body. The body became the Other. It was crucial to dominate it, or at least to neutralize it so that it would not stand in the mind's way.[106] By sub-

mitting the body to a strict rule, the ascetics, hence martyrs and saints, gained power over their environment, and their bodies became their strongest weapon.

The documents relating the story of Apa Victor son of Romanos indicate that by living as an ascetic the young man not only set himself apart from his peers and the rest of his family, but that he actually gained power over them.[107] The family had to comply with his ways as is implied by a passage of the farewell scene when Victor's mother mentions the special clothes she had made for him to wear during prayers and fasting.[108] The father of Victor, Romanos, does not seem to have shown much interest in the habits and beliefs of his son before the sacrifice test.[109] Perhaps he shrugged them off as a youth crisis which would pass away with time, marriage, position and reponsibilities. By refusing to sacrifice to Diocletian's gods, Victor endangered not only his own situation but also the position and credibility of his father, hence the security of the whole family.[110] An Arabic manuscript from the 19th century[111] suggests that Romanos played a role in the exile of his son to Alexandria. Here, under the jurisdiction of Armenius, Victor was secure since Armenius, as mentioned, owed his appointment to the assistance of Victor.

Ascetism allowed the martyrs to reconfigure their bodies as battlegrounds. It had trained the future martyr and made martyrdom possible. Ascetism permitted him to distance himself from his body and to abstract himself from earthly ties. Suffering did not deconstruct his world but in fact reinforced it. By marginalizing his body the martyr thwarted the establishment. The more his body was submitted to self-disciplinary techniques and pain, the stronger, the more distant and the more foreign, the more *terra incognita* it became for the Others, among whom were the torturers. At the same time, the disciplined body became the instrument of the martyr's victory.[112] The narrative intimates that the ability of the martyr to withstand pain was due to an assimilation of his own body into the glorified body of Christ. Recent psychiatric studies suggest that martyrs could escape pain through the practice of hysterical fugue, that is an altered state of consciousness in which language about realities and the realities represented are decoupled. Fugue can entail changes in self-identity focusing on the

body, such as disowning pain.[113] Neurologists and neurosurgeons are of the opinion that martyrs may have had recourse to the technique of hyper-ventilation.[114] The texts relating the martyrdoms of Apa Victor do remind us that, whenever during torture the suffering became unbearable, the heart of the martyr rose to heaven and that the archangel Michael never left his side. This might imply that Victor fainted every time pain exceeded his limit of endurance. However, as mentioned earlier, we should not strip the narratives of their coating of fantastic. The point with tales of martyrdoms is not to stress suffering but, rather, the lack of pain.[115] Martyrdom represented initiation, a transitional state and the way to holiness. The more intense the initiation process, the greater the reward at the end of the road.

The way to liminality

In his pioneering work *Rites de Passage*, Arnold van Gennep concentrated mostly on the "spatial movement" of initiation. He stressed the way in which actors pass from a stage where they are separated from society to a liminal state, an interstructural situation of being in a state of transition, to a third stage where the initiate is reintegrated into society. The first phase of rites de passage, separation, comprises symbolic behaviour signifying detachment of the individual or group, either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a "state"). The first martyrdom of Victor son of Romanos in Antioch and the departure scene with his mother exemplify well this first part. During the intervening liminal period, the state of the initiate is ambiguous; he is "betwixt and between".[116] During the marginal period sex distinctions are blurred, the "passenger" is sexless or androgynous.[117] A further characteristic of transitional beings or "threshold people" is that they, like Victor son of Romanos and the martyr in general, own nothing. They have no status, no rights, no property, no insignia, no rank, no kinship, and they are often secluded from structured society.[118] The martyr is placed in a world of violence where he is reduced to the state of shapeless, unnamable thing. However, this state of marginality and the violence to which the martyr's body has been submitted to

renders him sacred.[119] Maurice Bloch[120] sees liminality as the moment when the initiate is given the transcendental part of his identity. Liminality has a transformative function which makes the transition from one state to the other possible.[121]

In our case, Victor is taken away from his environment and is sent to Egypt where he goes through three martyrdoms. Egypt, in particular the south of Egypt and the desert, represents chaos to the civilized urban world of Antioch. In the tale of Victor son of Romanos the transition from order to chaos and finally to a new order is made gradually. At first Victor is submitted to a mild "civilized" trial and martyrdom in his home town Antioch. Being the seat of the emperor, Antioch represented the center of the ordered world. Victor is then sent to Alexandria, which although situated on the periphery, was still part of the structured hellenistic world. Nevertheless, Alexandria was "abroad" and represented uprooting for Victor. In Alexandria he endures severe questioning, but he is not put to death. Instead, Victor is sent further south, to the Thebaid which is still the cultivated countryside. The journey on the Nile is a recurrent feature of Coptic martyrologies. We always read about a martyr sailing up or down the river, or about some Roman governors travelling by boat.[122] The trial of Victor is improvised without any decorum to support it. Finally, Victor is exiled to the unstructured world of the desert, an empty, untamed landscape on the outskirts of civilization. Liminality in the case of the martyr is, in my opinion, tied firstly to experience (martyrdom) and then to space (the journey from Antioch to Egypt, sailing along the Nile, and finally the desert or the empty space). The flow of time is slow and seems of lesser importance.

The martyr is the traveller and, unlike the passenger of Turner who is passive and similar to the victim taken to sacrifice, he has the choice of deciding whether to continue his journey or not. In fact he is the one in control. Liminality is also tied to the idea of self-sacrifice in the etymological sense of the word, that is of "making (somebody or something, here, oneself) sacred" (from: *sacer*: holy, sacred, *facere*: to make). By offering himself to God, and submitting his body to a strict discipline so as to dissociate himself from it, the martyr sets himself apart. Martyrdom provides him with the means to transcend all limits and to attain gnosis, that is

a knowledge that surpasses all understanding and leads him to merge with Christ. Borderlines become blurred during the transitional state of martyrdom and the martyr is able to travel beyond all boundaries and to experience a mystical union with the divine. He then sees the end of the road.[123]

The last phase in rites de passage is aggregation. Van Gennep describes this third stage as a reintegration into society, while Turner considers it as a reintegration into the mundane world. Personally, I agree with Bloch[124], and do not see the last part of rites de passage as a complete reintegration. In part it is true because the initiate may physically come back to his original society, but he is not the same. In this last phase, the sacred has become inherent to his person. Martyrs like Victor son of Romanos never reintegrate into their original society. They never return to their point of departure, but move on to join another society. They reach another world of a very special kind: the realm of the elected few.

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This article is part of a wider study entitled: "*The Martyr as Witness. Coptic and Copto-Arabic oral and written traditions and the transmission of texts as mediators of religious memory*", in which I investigate different levels and ways of expression of religious memory. My study focuses on the epic passion of Victor son of Romanos. Therefore, I have kept to the masculine gender. The following original manuscripts have been consulted: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (BNP): MS Copte 129^{15}, Arabe 131, Arabe 150, Arabe 212, Arabe 4782, Arabe 4793, Arabe 4877, Arabe 4879.

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[2] Le Breton, 1982: 223f.
[3] Le Breton, 1982: 224.
[4] Le Breton, 1982: 228.
[5] Musurillo, 1956: 4.
[6] Halbwachs, 1976: 178f., Naguib, 1993a: 6f.
[7] Chadwick, 1985; Keyes, 1982: 4f.
[8] Graves, 1991: 309; Shennan, 1989: 332f.; Torrence & van der Leeuw, 1989.
[9] Bargatzky, 1989, Firth, 1965; Menzel, 1960; Press, 1969.
[10] Brown, 1971, 1987.
[11] Brock, 1973; Brown, 1982: 153f.
[12] Keyes, 1982: 2f.
[13] Amélineau, 1890: 165; Baumeister, 1972: 93f., 131f.; Delehaye, 1922: 137; van Esbroeck, 1991; Galtier, 1905; Horn, 1988: LXIIIf.; O'Leary, 1974: 101f., 278f.; Orlandi, 1991a: 1195; Samir, 1991, 1992: 93f.
[14] Delehaye, 1921: 236f., 1922: 149f.; Orlandi, 1991a: 1193.
[15] Delehaye, 1922: 117f.; Galtier, 1905; Horn, 1988: LIf., LXVIIIf.; O'Leary, 1974: 278f.
[16] Delehaye, 1921: 236f.; Orlandi, 1991a: 1197, 1992: 79f.
[17] Naguib, 1993c.
[18] Naguib, 1992b: 438f., 1994: 100f.
[19] Baumeister, 1972: 31, 96f., 131f.; Horn, 1988: LXVI; Orlandi, 1991a: 1193f.
[20] Delehaye, 1921: 236f.; Horn, 1988: LXIf.; Orlandi, 1991a: 1193.
[21] Bouriant, 1893; Budge, 1914; Elanskaja, 1969: 20f.; van Esbroeck, 1991; Galtier, 1905; Horn, 1988; von Lemm, 1911; Rossi, 1893; Till, 1935.
[22] Reymond & Barns, 1973.
[23] Graf, 1944.
[24] Samir, 1991, 1992: 93.
[25] Basset, 1905-1928, vol. IV: 338f.; Forget, 1912: 92f.
[26] Evetts, 1895: 131f., 173f., 210, 214, 249, 251, 280, 282.
[27] Heijer, 1989: 2f., 190f.; McCoull, 1984.
[28] BM Ms. 7022, fol. 1b-2a, Budge, 1914: 254f.
[29] BNP Arabe 212, fol. 151v-154r, BNP Arabe 4793, fol. 159r-162v; Naguib, 1993b: 103f.
[30] Naguib, 1993b: 103f.
[31] Naguib, 1993b: 102f.
[32] BNP Ms. Copte 129[15].
[33] Messick, 1993: 29f.
[34] Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Naguib, 1992b: 438f.; 1993b: 109, 1993c.
[35] Orlandi, 1980: 226f., 1991a: 1197.
[36] Orlandi, 1980: 226f., 1991a: 1197.
[37] Lantschoot, 1929: 85f.
[38] Naguib, 1993c; Orlandi, 1980: 226f., 1991a: 1197.
[39] BNP Copte 129[15], 59-60, Bouriant, 1893: 178; BNP Arabe 212, fol. 151v, BNP Arabe 4793, fol. 160r; Amélineau, 1890: 163f.; Berg-Onstwedden, 1990; Schwartz. 1958-60, Youssef, 1989.

Apostasy and the treatment of those who renounced Christianity was a constant source of dispute in early Christianity in Egypt. It continued to be a problem under the Arab domination when a great part of the population embraced Islam (Gellens, 1991: 937; Naguib, 1993b: 108; Orlandi, 1980: 232, 1991a: 1195, 1991b: 1457f.).

[40] Orlandi, 1980: 232, 1991b: 1454f.

[41] Horn, 1988: LVIIIf.; Naguib, 1993b: 109, 1993c; Orlandi, 1991a: 1192f., 1991b: 1457f.

[42] BM Ms. Oriental No. 7022, fol. 1a; Budge, 1914: 1; see also Arabic texts as BNP Arabe 4782, fols. 78v-79v.

[43] Berg-Onstwedder, 1990; Naguib, 1993b: 107, 1993c; Schwartz, 1958-60; Youssef, 1986-89.

[44] In Coptic and Arabic texts the name of Romanos is sometimes spelled Hermanos or Ehremanos as for example in Paese and Tecla, 78 vii 21, and BNP Arabe 212, fol. 162r.

[45] BM Ms. Oriental 729, fol. 4a, col. 1; BNP Arabe 4782, fols. 67r-68v, BNP Arabe 4793, fols. 159r-162v, 164r-166v.

[46] Naguib, 1992a: 6.

[47] Naguib, 1992a: 7.

[48] BM Ms. Or. 729, fols. 7b-8a, 10a, BNP Arabe 4782 fols. 68v-75r, BNP Arabe 4793.

[49] BM Ms. Or. 729, fol. 10b; BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 3a; Budge, 1914: 5; BNP Arabe 212, fol. 195v., BNP Arabe 4782, fol. 75r.

[50] BM Ms. Or. 729, fol. 11a; BNP Arabe 4782, fol. 75v.

[51] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 2b-3b, Budge, 1914: 4f.; Len. 5b-6a, Elanskaja, 1969: 29f.; BNP Arabe 131, fols. 2v, 3r, 5r-7v, BNP Arabe 212, fol. 195v, BNP Arabe 4782, fol. 75r, BNP Arabe 4793, fols. 167r-167v, 168v, BNP Arabe 8789, fol. 89v; Forget, 1912: 92f.

[52] Naguib, 1992a: 8; Resch, 1931: 60f.; Rousselle, 1983: 167f.

[53] Camporesi, 1988; Classen, 1992: 149f.; Naguib, 1990: 15f.; Pouchelle, 1976: 298.

[54] Douglas, 1979: 41f.

[55] Douglas, 1971: 61.

[56] Arbesmann, 1949-51.

[57] Turner, 1991: 160.

[58] Dembinska, 1985; Musurillo, 1956: 14, n. 27.

[59] Fiddes, 1992.

[60] Tilley, 1991: 471.

[61] Young & Scrinshaw, 1971.

[62] Brown, 1971, 1987.

[63] It would be a mistake to draw parallels between the diet and fasting of ascetics in Antiquity and early Christianity with the recent phenomena of *anorexia nervosa* and *bulimia*. These latter instances of self-starvation, which are to be found mainly among white, privileged adolescents of which a great percentage are females, have not been related to religious *fasting* or *ascetism* by the medical profession (Bynum, 1987: 297f.; Pouchelle, 1976: 304f.). Although anorexia nervosa and bulimia are means of control over the body and over the others their aims are not religious. In the case of martyrs and saints the expression *anorexia religiosa* might be more befitting (Børresen, 1988: 77). Personally, I prefer to keep to the spirit of the tales and retain some sense of fantastic.

[64] Horn, 1988: 62f.

[65] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 6b, 8b, Budge, 1914: 11, 15; BNP Copte 129[15], 59, 92, Bouriant, 1893: 177, 220; Horn, 1988: xxxviiif. The Arabic synaxari tell us that Victor son of Romanos held the third highest position in the empire.

[66] BNP Copte 129[15], 110-111, 120-121, Bouriant, 1893: 244f., 256f.

[67] Chapel XVII, Clédat, 1904-1906, pl. XXXIX, LIII, LIV-LVI.

[68] Piankoff, 1956, 1958: 161; see also Leroy, 1975: 16f., 58f. & pls. 39-48.

[69] Lewis, 1973; Meinardus, 1972.

[70] Delehaye, 1909.

[71] Naguib, 1990: 20.

[72] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 6b-8b; Bouriant, 1893: 177f.; Horn, 1988: 80f.; BNP Arabe 131, fols. 10r-21r.

[73] Naguib, 1993b: 106; Peters, 1986: 28.

[74] Tilley, 1991: 469.

[75] For the translation of the title *Komes* as "administrative governor", see Horn, 1988: xxxviii, 22f., 184f.

At the time of Diocletian, Rakote designated Alexandria and not only a district of the town.

[76] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 9a-11a, Budge, 1914: 15f.; BNP Copte 129[15], 60-61, Bouriant, 1893: 179f.; Horn, 1988: 200f.; BNP Arabe 212, fols. 158v-159r. Distrust of foreign countries and the dread of dying abroad are well known themes in ancient Egyptian literature which have been incorporated in Coptic and Copto-Arabic martyrologies (see commentaries in: Horn, 1988: 227f.).

[77] BNP Arabe 131, fol. 21v, Arabe 4879, fols. 85v-86r.

[78] Horn, 1988: 185.

[79] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 12a-17a, Budge, 1914: 21f.; Bouriant, 1893: 184f.; Horn, 1988: xif.

[80] BNP Arabe 131, BNP Arabe 212; Evetts, 1895: 251; Galtier, 1905: 128f.; Horn, 1988: xif., Lv & n. 1.

[81] Horn, 1988: xivf.; Meinardus, 1972: 322f., 1989: 28.

[82] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 18b, Budge, 1914: 31, mentions 40 days.

[83] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 17a-19b, Budge, 1914: 29f.; BNP Copte 129[15], 82-95, Bouriant, 1893: 206f.; BNP Arabe 131, fol. 51v-59v, BNP 212, fol. 193v-198v.

[84] Newbold, 1984: 207.

[85] Guillaumont, 1968-69.

[86] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 19b.

[87] We have here an example of the marvellous in the narrative. The tongue which had been cut off in the previous torture seems to have grown again.

[88] Tazi 1990: 545.

[89] BNP Arabe 131, fols. 61v-63r, BNP Arabe 212, fols. 204r-205r.

[90] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 24a-25a, Budge, 1914: 41f.; BNP Copte 129[15], 99-102, Bouriant, 1893: 229; BNP Arabe 131, fols. 62r-63r, BNP Arabe 212, fols. 204v-205r.

[91] Bynum, 1990: 82.

[92] Newbold, 1984: 207.

The victory of the martyr is expressed by the name Victor which may indicate a status rather than a real name (*prænomen*). The name Victor was popular among martyrs in Africa and elsewhere (Baumeister, 1973: 31 & n. 95; Saxer, 1968). It is likely that it was given posthumously as a sort of *cognomen ex voto* which acknowledged the act of the martyr and asserted the new identity of the bearer.

[93] BNP Arabe 131, fol. 64v., BNP Arabe 212, fol. 206r.

It is interesting to note that the one who embalms Victor has an Egyptian name. Mummification was an Egyptian practice since it was believed that the preservation of the body was a prerequisite to eternal life (Baumeister, 1972: 58f.; Naguib, 1991: 104f.; Schenkel, 1977: 13).

[94] BM Ms. Or. 729, fol. 66b, col. 1; BNP Arabe 131, fol. 64v, BNP Arabe 212, fol. 207v, BNP Arabe 4793, fols. 229v-234v.

[95] Evetts, 1895: 251.

[96] Bynum, 1990: 65f.
[97] Camporesi, 1988.
[98] Bynum, 1990: 50f.
[99] Naguib, 1994: 102f.
[100] Keyes, 1982: 4f.
[101] *De resurrectione mortuorum*, 8.2; title of and quoted in Stroumsa's article (Stroumsa, 1990).
[102] Foucault, 1975, 1984.
[103] Kaelber, 1987; Stricker, 1976, 1980.
[104] The ideal of the ascetic in Egypt was inspired by the Life of St. Anthony as related by Athanasius.
[104b] Keyes, 1982: 2f.
[105] Alliez & Feher, 1990: 47; Dodds, 1965; Fox, 1986; Newbold, 1984: 208.
[106] Tazi, 1990: 547.
[107] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 2a-3b, Budge, 1914: 4f.; Elanskaja, 1969: 29f.; Horn, 1988: 60f.; BNP Arabe 131, fols. 2v-6v, 9v-10v, BNP Arabe 4782, fol. 89v, BNP Arabe 4793, fols. 167r-168v.
[108] BNP Copte 129[15], 65, Bouriant, 1893: 182.
[109] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 5a-5b, Budge, 1914: 8f.; BNP Copte 129[15], 45, 51, Bouriant, 1893: 157, 166.
[110] BM Ms. Or. 7022, fol. 7b; Budge, 1914: 13.
[111] BNP Arabe 4879, fols. 97r-97v.
[112] Tilley, 1991: 467f.
[113] Tilley, 1991: 472f.
[114] Personal communication Dr. Mahmoud Naguib.
[115] Bynum, 1990: 82.
[116] Turner, 1967: 98f.
[117] Girard, 1972: 391; Turner, 1967: 98f.
[118] Turner, 1967: 98f.; 1970: 94f.
[119] Girard, 1972: 390f.
[120] Bloch, 1992: 6.
[121] Gilhus, 1984: 110.
[122] Delehaye, 1922: 322.
[123] BNP Copte 129[15], 100-101, Bouriant, 1893: 231; BNP Arabe 131, fols. 63v-64r, BNP Arabe 212, fols. 205r-206r.
[124] Bloch, 1992: 15.

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BNP: Bibliothèque Nationale Paris

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